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GEORGIA HISTORICAL ASSOCIATION

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This number of *The Quarterly* is devoted to an account of the reorganization of the Georgia Historical Society following the amalgamation with it of the Georgia Historical Association, and it is deemed fitting that in such an account there should be included a statement covering the origin and history of the Association. In transmitting the request that the writer prepare such a statement, Colonel Lawton, until recently President of the Society, expressed the opinion that we should put on record "the history of that Association which did so much good and which has proven a very vital element in what I believe will be the beginning of greatly increased influence of the Historical Society. It has gone out of existence and we should preserve its record."

The organization of the Georgia Historical Association was the result of several conferences arranged during the spring and summer of 1916. Those participating in the conferences were for the most part, men and women living in the northern part of the State, and in the group were several professors of history in the leading colleges of the State. On August 16, 1916, a circular letter was sent to a selected list of Georgians, inviting them to become members of a new historical association. This circular was signed by Honorable Lucian L. Knight, State Compiler of Records, Chancellor David C. Barrow of the University of Georgia, Miss Mildred Rutherford, Historical General of the U. D. C., Mrs. H. H. McCall, State Regent of the D. A. R., Mrs. H. M. Franklin, President of the Georgia U. D. C., Judge Samuel B. Adams, formerly of the Supreme Court of Georgia, Dr. J. H. T. McPherson, Professor of History in the University of Georgia, and R. P. Brooks, Professor of History University of Georgia. The reasons for this venture were thus expressed in the letter:

"The purpose of this letter is to enlist your interest in the proposed organization of a new historical society in Georgia. Under the auspices of the Georgia Historical Society, which has been in existence for many years, a great deal of valuable historical work has

been accomplished. That society has confined its activities largely to Colonial and Revolutionary history, and the documents published in its Collections have been of prime importance. We feel that there is now a need for another society, whose aim shall be to assist in popularizing the study of State history, and especially to work for the collection and preservation of materials bearing on the history of Georgia in the nineteenth century.

"This later phase of our history has been greatly neglected. There is no comprehensive treatment of the ante-bellum and war periods, a condition due in part to the fact that the documentary materials for such a study have not been collected and put at the disposal of the historian. The archives of the State are not in a satisfactory condition for use, and many individuals have priceless historical documents stuffed away in garrets and boxes, where they are useless for practical purposes and are in danger of destruction from fire or neglect.

"We desire to see ultimately established in Georgia a department of archives and history, with adequate powers under the law for the systematizing of State archives and the collection and preservation of historical materials."

The response to this appeal was wide-spread and convinced those who had taken the initiative that there was a real demand for a second historical organization. A meeting of those who had signified their desire to become members was therefore called, and, on April 10, 1917, at the State Capitol in Atlanta the Georgia Historical Association was organized with four hundred and fifty members. Honorable L. L. Knight was elected President, Professor T. H. Jack, of Emory University, Vice President, and Professor R. P. Brooks of the University of Georgia, Secretary and Treasurer. These officers with Mrs. Maud Barker Cobb, State Librarian, and Professor J. R. McCain, of Agnes Scott College, constituted the Executive Council. A Constitution and By-Laws were adopted along the usual lines. At this meeting a program of historical papers was presented. These papers, with the minutes of the meeting, the Constitution and a list of the members of the Association were printed in the Proceedings of the First Annual Session of the Association, published in April 1917.

During the first year of the Association an active campaign for members was carried on, but, as is usually the case, resignations were not slow to come in, and the new members enrolled barely sufficed to keep the membership up to the original numbers. During this year the Legislature, due partly to the efforts of the Association, created the State Department of Archives and History.

The second annual meeting of the Association was held in Atlanta, on April 6, 1918. Honorable L. L. Knight was re-elected President, Mrs. Maud Barker Cobb, Vice President, and Professor R. P. Brooks, Secretary and Treasurer. The two additional members of the Council elected were Miss Helen M. Prescott and Mr. Alfred C. Newell, both of Atlanta. The program of this meeting consisted of an address by Professor U. B. Phillips, formerly of the University of Georgia, now of the University of Michigan, on the subject "The Plantation Product of Men." Miss Nellie Adamson of Rome, read a paper on "The Secession Movement in Georgia," and a very informing paper descriptive of the DeRenne Collection of books on Georgia History by Mr. L. L. Mackall of Savannah. These papers, except that of Mr. Mackall, are printed on the Proceedings of the Association for 1918.*

The report of the Secretary-Treasurer showed a total of \$480.50 collected from dues, and disbursements of \$399.38, leaving a balance of \$81.12. The number of members was four hundred and fifty-five, many of whom, however, had never paid any dues to the Association. The Treasurer was authorized to purchase Liberty bonds with any unexpended funds in his keeping. In the subsequent drives \$500 was invested in Government bonds.

The third annual meeting of the Association was held in Atlanta, on April 12, 1919. Judge Andrew J. Cobb, of Athens, was elected President, and Mr. Alfred C. Newell, of Atlanta, first Vice President. A change in the constitution had been made creating the office of second Vice President, and Mr. Orville A. Park, of Macon, was elected to this office. Professor W. O. Payne, of the University of Georgia, was made Secretary-Treasurer. In addition to the annual address of the President, papers were read by Professor W. D. Hooper, of the University of Georgia, and Professor W. G. Perry, of the Georgia School of Technology, on the war activities of those institutions. The Association also received interesting reports

*Mr. Mackall's paper was printed in the *Georgia Historical Quarterly* for June, 1918, Vol. II, pp. 63-86.

from committees appointed to collect materials bearing on the participation of Georgia in the War. These addresses, papers, and reports were printed in the Proceedings of the Third Annual Session. The report of the Treasurer showed a cash balance of \$23.95 and \$400 worth of Liberty bonds. The membership at that time was four hundred and forty-four.

During the interval between the third annual session and the time set for the fourth annual meeting, the officers of the Georgia Historical Society approached the Association on the subject of merging the two organizations. Details of the negotiations which eventuated in this union are given elsewhere in this number of the *Quarterly*. It may briefly be said here that the suggestion of a union was favorably received by the officers of the Association. It had become apparent that there were not enough historically-minded people in Georgia to support two organizations in the way they should be supported. We were having the usual experience of state historical societies. It was difficult to find new members, and many of those who nominally retained their membership failed to pay their dues, and the attendance on the annual meetings was always small. The officers of the Association were unable with the small funds at their disposal to do anything of lasting value, except to publish a number of excellent papers in the annual Proceedings. At the time the merger was proposed the Association had almost completed plans for publishing a historical quarterly with funds raised by private subscriptions among the members.

The officers of the Association, therefore, met in a very friendly spirit the overtures of the Society. A number of conferences were held and an agreement reached by committees of the two societies. This agreement of merger, herein printed, was unanimously approved by the two committees and unanimously adopted by the two organizations. The terms of the agreement have recently been carried into effect, with the result that fundamental changes have been made in the Georgia Historical Society. It has become more thoroughly state-wide in its membership—the members of the Association automatically becoming members of the older organization; its new officers

and Board of Curators are chosen from the State at large; its ordinary membership fee is reduced from \$5 to \$3; and plans are in the making which will lead to an improvement in the *Quarterly*. In so far as these changes have come as the result of the organization of the Georgia Historical Association, the younger organization may fairly claim not to have lived in vain.

The fourth and last meeting of the Association was held on May 20th, in Atlanta. The Proceedings have not been published, but two excellent papers were presented by Professor E. M. Coulter, of the University of Georgia, and Miss Mildred Thompson, of Vassar College. Professor Coulter's subject was "The Nullification Movement in Georgia; Miss Thompson's "The Freedmen's Bureau in Georgia in 1865-66." These papers will probably be printed in a later number of the *Quarterly*. The report of the Secretary-Treasurer showed a cash balance of \$81.48 and \$500 invested in Liberty bonds.

It was at this meeting that the Association adopted the report of the two committees appointed to draw up a scheme of union. The whole question was presented by Colonel Lawton, a member of both organizations, in his usual happy manner, and after a brief discussion the agreement was adopted by unanimous vote, as above recorded. A short time after the meeting the Association issued a formal letter to all of its members advising them of the action of the Association and notifying them that their membership had been transferred to the Georgia Historical Society. The writer has heard on all hands nothing but approval of the action of the Association and it is hoped that the former members will do everything in their power to make vital and lasting the work of the Georgia Historical Society under the new regime.